



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



STATE CEMETERY UPDATE



“The movement toward completion of your first State Veterans Cemetery grows closer by the day,” said SDDVA Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard. “I’ve been visiting the site that will eventually serve as the proper and fitting resting place for veterans and their eligible dependents.”

Pollard is amazed at the fact that each time he visits the cemetery it has a new look and

he is more capable of envisioning what the finished place of honor will look like.

The face of the site has changed substantially for those who first visited and had to conceptualize what a cemetery might look like in the farmland it was intended to replace. Buildings have been framed, concrete is being poured in numerous places for various functions, and roads have been cut in that will start being paved in the near future.

“This project makes me recognize, and realize, how thankful I am for those who have worked hard to see this project come to life and how thankful I am to everyone who gives each day to serve veterans and their loved ones,” said Pollard.

Deputy Secretary Pollard had the chance this week to give SDDVA Secretary Whitlock a detailed tour of the campus.

There is a lot to do to get this project completed, but the finish line is within vision.

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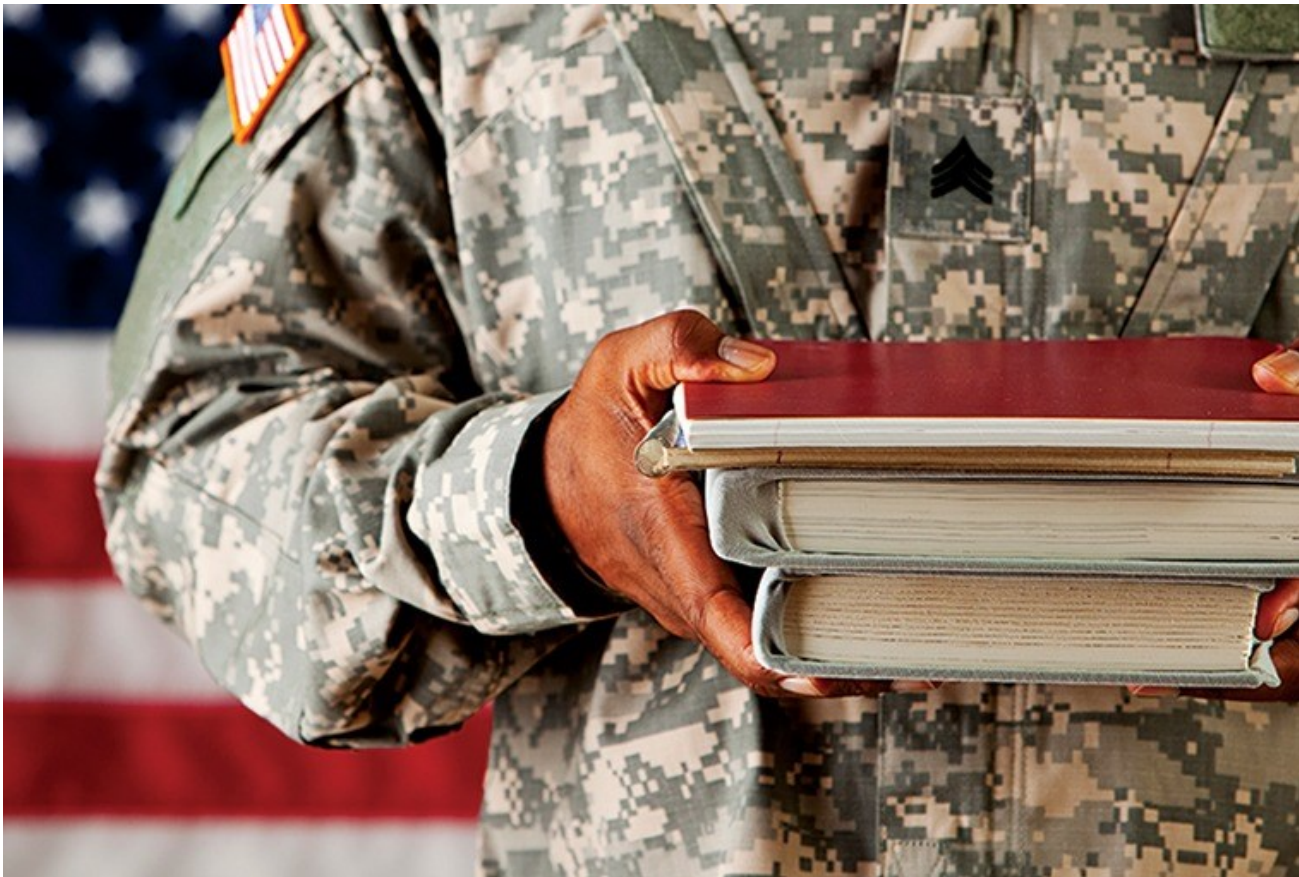
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SANFORD HEALTH MILITARY AND VETERAN SCHOLARSHIP

Sanford Health is accepting applications for four \$5,000 scholarships awarded annually to veterans, Guard/Reserve members or active duty military service members who have demonstrated leadership and commitment in their community.

The Sanford Health Military and Veteran Scholarship honors those who have furthered their own progress and enriched the lives of others, especially in service, academics and community involvement. Interested students should [apply online](#). **Applications are due Aug. 31.**



Applicants must be a veteran, Guard/Reserve or active duty military service member and a full-time student pursuing a bachelor's, graduate or professional degree from an accredited U.S.-based institution of higher education. They must also have at least one full year of education remaining. The scholarship is administered by the Sanford Health Department of Veterans and Military Services and was created in 2018 as part of the health system's efforts to serve veterans and military personnel through patient care, employment opportunities and community outreach.

Click here to learn more about the Sanford scholarship. <https://news.sanfordhealth.org/news/sanford-health-offering-5000-scholarship-to-veterans/>.

VA OFFERS DEBT RELIEF TO VETERANS THROUGH YEAR'S END

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced its commitment to extend debt relief to Veterans adversely impacted by COVID-19 to the end of 2020 by suspending certain debt collection actions.

The department recognizes veterans and beneficiaries are still being greatly impacted by the coronavirus prompting the extension of financial relief.

"Veterans and their families should be focused on their health and safety during the pandemic," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "The VA is taking action to give those with pending debts greater flexibility during these challenging times."

The VA is suspending all actions on veteran debts under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Treasury Department. This includes the suspension of collection action or extending repayment terms on preexisting VA debts, whichever the veteran prefers.

For benefit debts, veterans should contact the VA Debt Management Center at 1-800-827-0648.

For health care debts, veterans should contact the Health Resource Center at 1-866-400-1238 or <https://www.pay.gov> for payments.



SDDVA SIOUX FALLS STAFF PARTICIPATE IN ANNUAL VA 2K WALK



SDDVA Sioux Falls Claims Office staff participated in the 10th Annual VA 2K Walk in Sioux Falls last week. The Walk encourages people to live active lifestyles and allows participants to support homeless veterans through voluntary donations of cleaning supplies to give to homeless veterans when they move into a home or apartment.

Kudos to the Sioux Falls team for their collection of cleaning supplies. They have been participating in this event for five years.

GOEHRING PASSES BOARD

Congratulations and kudos to SDDVA's Cole Goehring. Cole is a part of our team at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home and recently passed his physical therapy assistant boards.

Cole started his tenure at the State Veterans Home in April and just recently was named the physical therapy assistant.

"We value Cole's commitment and dedication," said SDDVA Secretary Greg Whitlock. "His expertise will assist us in our continued goal to take care of our heroes."



VA AND MAZON PARTNER TO SUPPORT VETERAN FOOD SECURITY

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it is partnering with MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger to improve and ensure veterans have reliable access to food.

The VA and MAZON will work together to distribute information to veterans to increase awareness about the risks associated with food insecurity and share the benefits of programs like the [Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program](#) (SNAP).

“Veterans must have consistent and reliable access to healthy foods in order to thrive,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “By raising awareness of the problem of veterans’ food insecurity and executing solutions, this partnership will lead to more veterans having more food on the table.”

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger is a national advocacy organization working to end hunger among people of all faiths in the United States and Israel. The organization works to raise awareness about [community and government resources](#) to encourage the anti-hunger community to effectively address emerging issues.

“The VA and MAZON will use various tactics to help veterans facing food insecurity access available food assistance resources, like trainings for VA staff to help them better recognize and respond to veteran food insecurity,” said MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger President and CEO Abby J. Leibman. “These tactics include exploring the creation of a VA pilot program on SNAP outreach for veterans that can be replicated and scaled up and formalizing target goals for Veteran SNAP eligibility screenings and application assistance.”

This partnership is managed by the Veterans Health Administration’s Nutrition and Food Services office and was facilitated by the VHA Office of Community Engagement (OCE). Partnerships supported by OCE, such as this one, support VHA’s commitment to delivering patient-driven health care.

Visit [VA health partnerships](#) and [MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger](#) for more information.



MIDWEST HONOR FLIGHT UPDATE

Aaron Verhey (on left), State Representative for Lake Chapter of ABATE, presents a check for \$1,502 to Aaron VanBeek, President of Midwest Honor Flight.

The donation is enough to send two veterans to Washington, DC on a Midwest Honor Flight.

The donation was raised by bikers during the Lake ABATE sponsored poker run June 27th.

This great world is full of more heroes than we know! Mike Davis, a 25 year employee with Den Hartog Industries in Sioux Falls recently was presented with his longevity check. Mike fully appreciates the sacrifice and commitment



of the men and women who serve this great country in the armed forces to make this country what it is and to enjoy the freedoms we have. Mike elected to donate his check to Midwest Honor Flight. His contribution will fund the trip for two veterans.

Last but not least, "Jump and Jive", tickets are now on sale for Midwest Honor Flight's third annual Hangar Dance. This year's dance will take place at the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance, Inc. on Saturday, October 3, and will feature a vintage singing trio



in full costume, performing USO Style music! Visit www.midwesthonorflight.org/dance for tickets and more information!



A BIG SHOUT OUT AND KUDOS

The Dairy Queen Grill and Chill in Pierre recently had a fundraiser July 4th for the Post 8 American Legion. This week they presented a check for \$630 to the Post Commander. The funds were donated for the Post's restoration project. Fun fact—Post 8's log cabin was built in 1940!



The Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home recently received a donation of \$4,519.64 from Tori Beck of Gillette, WY. Tori is the granddaughter of a Vietnam Veteran and has always prided herself in supporting all veterans.

In 2019 and 2020 Tori hosted a "Thank a Veteran Dinner." Her success is evident by the donation she made to the State Veterans Home, as well as to American Legion and VFW Posts in Gillette. This year's event was held on Leap Day, so Beck asked the community to "leap up" and help a veteran. She thought she would raise \$1,000 to \$2,000 with the dinner and through live and silent auctions. "It started as very, very small and then just got bigger and bigger and bigger!

Her efforts have not gone unnoticed. The Wyoming State American Legion started a new award in honor of Tori. She was the first recipient of the new Commanders Excellence Award in 2018-19. The trophy includes a small sculpture of a silver Eagle preparing to take flight.

Beck is ready to do that, as well. After finishing her sophomore year in 2020-21, she hopes to spend her junior or senior year at an academy, such as West Point, New York, (Army) or in Annapolis, Maryland (Navy). She'd like to get a degree in combat medicine and be a medic in the Army or Navy, like her grandfather.



VA EXPANDS FUNDING FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE FOR VETERANS EXPERIENCING OR AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it is allocating an additional \$400 million of its [coronavirus relief funding](#) to enhance the department's emergency relief response for veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) allocated \$17.2 billion for the Veterans Health Administration of which \$700 million is devoted to expanding services for and addressing the challenges faced by veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

"The additional allocation of CARES Act funding will support the continuity of care of vulnerable veterans during the COVID-19 pandemic," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "With this additional funding, the VA's Homeless Programs Office can provide more homeless prevention assistance and emergency housing to make it possible for veterans to maintain appropriate physical distancing and to ensure they are living in safe conditions."

The newly allocated funds will be used for the [Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program](#) (SSVF). SSVF offers several ways to secure housing for veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

In total, \$602 million of coronavirus relief funding has now been allocated for this program, which will also help the [Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing Program](#) place veterans in safe housing to isolate them from the virus.

Other coronavirus relief funding devoted to providing emergency shelter and supportive services for veterans includes \$88 million for the [Grant and Per Diem Program](#) and \$10 million for the [Health Care for Homeless Veterans Program](#).

The VA is hosting a national webinar July 17 to support budgeting and planning for grantees of the SSVF funding. [Learn more](#) about how the VA is working to protect veterans during the COVID-19 pandemic and about [VA's homeless programs](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

Jul 22— SD Veterans Council—Military Alliance Building—1600 W. Russell Street—Sioux Falls—9:00 am (CT)
Aug 5-11—HyVee Stores “Operation Helpful Smile” DAV Fundraiser—Sioux Falls
Aug 6—National A&W Root Beer Float Day
Aug 24—Barrel House Day of Giving for Midwest Honor Flight—Sioux Falls
Aug 24-27—SDDVA Annual Benefit School—Ramkota Conference Center—Pierre
Sep 3—Veterans Day at the SD State Fair
Sep 3-7—SD State Fair
Sep 5—DAV/727 Poker Run—Swiftel Center—Brookings
Sep 7—State Offices Closed
Sep 11—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—VFW Post 1273—Rapid City—10:00 am (MT)
Sep 18—POW/MIA Day Ceremony—Veterans Memorial Park—Sioux Falls—6:30 pm
Sep 18—Veterans Stand Down—SD Military Heritage Alliance Building—Sioux Falls—9:00 am—2:00 pm (CT)
Nov 13—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Domiciliary Auditorium—Hot Springs VAMC—10:00 am (MT)
Dec 1—Governor’s State of the Budget Address—1:00 pm (CT)
Jan 12—Governor’s State of the State Address—1:00 pm (CT)
Jan 13—SDDVA/SD Veterans Council Legislative Reception

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